

Issue 40, 11.21.08 CDFA's New Social Media, An Energy Innovator, Schools and Gardens, Families and Farming

California government is moving forward into the Internet age by expanding its online tools, services and outreach efforts through its [CA.Gov YouTube](#) video site. Since its launch in 2005, YouTube now hosts billions of video clips watched by millions of viewers each day. CDFA has recognized the benefits of this new technology and has its own video channel "[CDFA Today](#)" to help build a digital connection with the public and share our stories and experiences of agriculture. Please take a few minutes to look over our video offerings and learn more about CDFA and agriculture around this great state.

Dixon Ridge Farms, Winters

I was honored to visit this farm and help pay tribute to their work in sustainable walnut farming and bio-energy generation.

Russ Lester is one of our state's pioneers in using walnut shells to produce renewable biogas for his farm's energy needs. If you look at this [video clip](#), you will see that after my brief remarks I had a chance to participate in a mechanized walnut harvesting demonstration.



Russ explained that part of his goal is to "become totally sustainable with our energy usage." He further went on to say that, "Our desire is to implement the goals of [AB 32](#), energy self-sufficiency and reduce climate change impacts from our business by 2012. Our intention is to use methods that do not use food for energy and are replicable in other businesses now." As with any far-reaching goal, there will be challenges along the way. [Dixon Ridge Farms](#) is an exceptional example of how our state's farmers are using [adaptive management](#) practices to conserve California's natural resources and protect our environment while remaining economically viable.

Will Rogers Elementary, Santa Monica

Hunger, obesity and malnutrition—these are all symptoms of an ailing society. However, recently I was privileged to witness how dramatically change can bring about success. In this [video clip](#) I'm talking with fifth-grade students in Santa Monica about delicious and nutritious snacks. They participate in the federal [Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program](#). Reauthorized in the [2008 farm bill](#), this program already provides our state with \$2.7 million in funding, and that amount is set to expand. When you introduce new, healthy foods to young people through a snack program, or a school garden, you have a recipe for teaching them how to thrive.



Thank you for your support of California agriculture.

A. G. Kawamura

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This young boy is me on my favorite toy—a small-scale tractor that replicated those my father used. In this [video clip](#) I tell my own personal story of growing up in a farming family that also happened to farm on the urban edge. I believe this has given me a unique perspective, one that I hope will help us to face the challenge of a vastly urbanized—and growing—state of California.



My family's been involved in agriculture in Southern California for about a hundred years. All my grandparents came from Japan at the turn of the last century and started farming in the Los Angeles area. When that was paved over we moved to Orange County. I learned that the farming ethic is always that you work hard, do the right thing and be a good part of your community. I'm very proud to be a farmer and from a farming family.

When I was in my early teens I had a chance to really get involved with agriculture. My father had bought some beehives from a farmer who was retiring and gave them to me. I ended up learning how to take care of them, then harvest and market the honey. I got stung a lot, but I think I learned a lot about how important it is to take care of a population of things other than yourself. I also learned how critical a role bees play in terms of the nature of our world.

We are "edible landscapers." We don't own the ground that we farm, we lease all the ground. And we're constantly having to move around because of development. In fact, I think we've learned the hard way, although it's been an asset, that you can take very bad pieces of ground that are choked with weeds or compacted and if you take care of them you can bring them back into production. I think that's been a great lesson for us of recognizing that soil is always a resource, and you can nurture it, you can bring it back, you can inject and put into it the life it needs to give back life.

As the secretary of CDFA, I'm dedicated and committed to protecting not only our agricultural resources but also the environment, because they go hand in hand. Here in the 21st century, agriculture and the environment really are coming together as a very important partnership. The farmers in our state are amazing, they produce 400 different crops. They're just like my own family operation. Growers have a lot of ingenuity, a lot of determination to stay in business, and I know the role that this department plays and the role that government plays in helping make sure that we have this stable food supply.

For that we can all give thanks.

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